

Home / News / Local News / Porter County News

You go, girls

Lego robotics, mentoring program give young females step up in science, technology, engineering, math

- Story
- Discussion
- Image (2)

By Susan O'Leary - Times Correspondent | Posted: Sunday, March 7, 2010 12:00 am | No Comments
Posted

Font Size:

Default font size

Larger font size



[Buy this photo](#)

JOHN J. WATKINS | THE TIMES Mentor Laura Craig and 11-year-old Alexandra Jacobs plan a strategy to make their Lego robot traverse an obstacle course Saturday as part of a girls mentoring program at Ivy Tech Community College in Valparaiso.



VALPARAISO | Building robots from Legos was the challenge Saturday for middle school girls and adult mentors at the Lego Robotics Workshop sponsored by Discoveries Unlimited at Ivy Tech Community College.

"They are building them from scratch and programming them to get them to do different things," said Cathie Dull of Discoveries Unlimited.

Discoveries Unlimited is an organization that links adult mentors with girls who are interested in science, technology, engineering and math, known as STEM.

Each team was provided with a Lego set and an instruction booklet to assemble their tabletop-sized robots, which they programmed to make various moves, powered by AA batteries.

Discoveries Unlimited brought in Steve Florence, of West Lafayette, an engineering and technology teacher at West Lafayette Junior-Senior High School, who leads a 35-student robotics team called the Westside Boiler Invasion.

Florence's team builds robots for national competitions organized by FIRST, or For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, an international organization for high school students interested in technology and engineering.

"The idea is to inspire students in math, science and technology," said Florence, who brought some of his students to assist Saturday. "The goal is to try to find more females to be inspired because there's a need for their creativity and everything women bring to the table in the business world."

Florence said some of his former students have successful careers in STEM fields working for companies such as Boeing and Google.

Ava Massarella partnered with mentor Amanda Maynard to build her robot.

"I've always wanted to work at NASA when I'm older," said Ava, a sixth-grader at Ben Franklin Middle School in Valparaiso. "Maybe I'll build the next rover to go on a planet."

Ava said the hands-on experience building a robot makes learning fun.

"I don't like just reading it out of a textbook," said Ava, whose science teacher recommended she get involved in Discoveries Unlimited. "I like to do it."

Maynard, executive director of the Challenger Learning Center in Hammond, said, "that's the way science should be."

"I think STEM education is important especially for young girls," Maynard said. "If Ava chooses a career in the STEM path, then I've helped."

Maynard, a former teacher, said the mentors, not just the girls, benefit from participation in Discoveries Unlimited.

"I like the personal connection," Maynard said. "It's very rewarding to me."

Florence believes the future of students interested in STEM careers is unlimited.

"Let's get them inspired and see where they take themselves," he said.

Posted in Porter on *Sunday, March 7, 2010 12:00 am* | Tags: Indiana

Share This Story

Print Email ShareThis

Similar Stories

- Man arrested in connection with Friday's Workforce Development shooting identified
- Valpo gas station robbed at gunpoint
- DUI crackdown planned for St. Patrick's
- Maple sugar flowing
- Child porn cases on the rise
- Museum offers exhibits, demonstrations
- Your Porter County briefs
- Ciotola believes in meeting goals

Sponsored Links

[Obama Approves Credit Card Bill](#)

Find Out if You Qualify For Relief.

www.LowerMyBills.com/Debt

[Obama Urges Homeowners to Refinance](#)

Rates Hit 3.62% APR! Calculate New Mortgage Payment Now.

www.SeeRefinanceRates.com

[Online Degrees](#)

Get Your AA, BA, Masters or PhD at a Top Online School. Start Now.

Education.Nextag.com/Online-Degrees

Ads by Yahoo!



Barbara Vander Woude
Physical Therapy Expert
APT PLUS

**CLICK HERE
FOR PROFILE**